NEW
NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $3.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 361. Price, Five Cents.

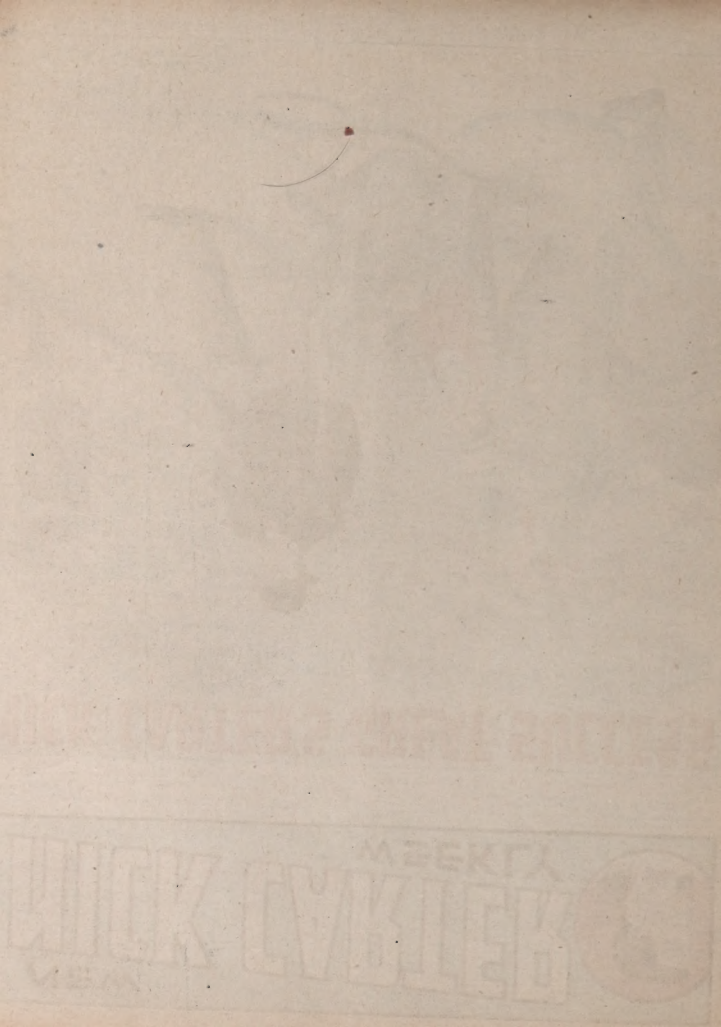
NICK CARTER'S GREAT SUCCESS

OR

THE HUNTING DOWN OF INSURANCE FRAUDS

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

All noted the fortunate circumstance that there was not a person in sight, when the party of four emerged from the sewer.



NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription $2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the N. Y. Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, *238 William St., N. Y. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1903, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

No. 361. NEW YORK, November 28, 1903. Price Five Cents.

NICK CARTER'S GREAT SUCCESS;

OR,

The Hunting Down of Insurance Frauds.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

A whole city was stirred to its depths! The stories in the papers of the great insurance frauds were the subject of talk on every corner.

"If Nick Carter cannot unwind this reel," said one man to another, "it will never be unwound."

It had been proved that several people who were well known in their neighborhoods had left them for the great city of C—— and had never returned.

When the suspicions of the insurance adjusters were aroused something was done.

Nick Carter had been secured and had been told to obtain all the help he could make use of, and to spare nothing in the matter of expense, to bring to light the awful practices which the companies now believed had been indulged in to secure money.

It was more than hinted that murder had been done in more than one case.

To-day testimony was to be taken which it was thought would prove this.

The son of a man named Henry Sterling, whose body had been picked up on the lake shore, was to testify.

The excitement was unbounded when the young man came forward. With great solemnity the district attorney entered the court room and placed with his papers on the table the following articles taken from the deceased.

1. A pair of dark-gray trousers with the name Henry Sterling stamped on the muslin lining of the waist band.

2. A clasp knife with a brown bone handle and two blades. On one side of the knife was a small metal plate on which was scratched the letter S.

3. A silk gauze flesh tinted undershirt It was wrinkled and torn down the back.

4. A set of false teeth on a gold plate, an upper set, with one of the front teeth slightly chipped.

Nick Carter was permitted to examine these closely and to make some notes in regard to them before the examination proceeded.

The first witness called was a fisherman, David Hodge, who found the body. He was a tall, well-bronzed fellow who seemed intelligent and honest.

The district attorney questioned him carefully.

Q. "What time did you discover this body?"

A. "A few minutes after five o'clock yesterday morning. I came out of my boathouse and started down from there to examine my nets. As I neared the old pier I saw an object, which I at first took to be a log, lying at the side of the wharf. When I got up to it I found it was the body of a man. I pulled the body up on the beach and then I went and notified the police."

Q. "Was any other person near you when you discovered the body?"

A. "I saw no one."

Q. "Did you remove anything from the body?"

A. "I did not."

At the conclusion of his testimony Dr. John Brown, the coroner's physician, was called.

He testified:

"I am a physician. I reside at No. 2156 Jerome Avenue. I made the post-mortem examination of the body of the deceased early this morning, in the presence of Drs. Goode and Rightner. I was very careful with my work."

Q. "The body was very badly decomposed?"

A. "It was."

Q. "How long do you think the body had been in the water?"

A. "Only a few days."

Q. "Did Drs. Goode and Rightner coincide with you in regard to this opinion?"

A. "They did."

Q. "It is your belief that this body had been in the water only a few days. You think that this man died somewhere in this city, that the body was kept until it began to decay, and then the person who had it in his possession took it to the lake and threw it in?"

A. "I do."

This created a great sensation in the court room. People craned their necks to see how the officials took this.

Q. "Can you tell how long this man had been dead?"

A. "About three months."

Q. "Did he die a natural death?"

A. "He did not."

Again a great wave of emotion went over the room.

"Explain."

"From the examination I made I found that the deceased must have been a healthy man. Dr. Goode informed me that he had examined Henry Sterling when he applied for insurance. He found him a remarkably well-preserved man. I found that the lungs were congested, and there was evidence of strangulation, but there were no marks on the throat to indicate that the deceased had been choked to death. The stomach had little food in it, and I should say that the man had eaten nothing for some hours before his death."

Q. "What is your opinion in regard to the cause of death?"

A. "I am of the opinion that he died from inhaling gas."

Q. "Are you positive that there were no marks of violence on his body?"

A. "Yes, sir."

Q. "Did you have the contents of the stomach analyzed?"

A. "I did."

Q. "Did you find traces of poison?"

A. "I did not."

Drs. Goode and Rightner were called. They confirmed all that had been said.

Q. "At whose request did you examine Henry Sterling, in order that he might be insured?"

A. "At the request"—here every ear in the court room was strained—"at the request of James Douglass."

A rustle among the spectators was felt and heard, for this was the first time many of them had heard the name of the man to whom the finger of suspicion pointed.

The next witness was George White, one of the clerks employed at the Grand Union Hotel, Philadel-

phia, where Sterling had put up on his arrival. He deposed:

"I have known Henry Sterling for ten years. I have been employed at the Grand Union Hotel as night clerk for that length of time. Previous I was a clerk in a Louisville hotel. Whenever Mr. Sterling was in C—— he stopped at our hotel. He came to the city frequently on business. On the evening of March 16 he registered at our hotel. I assigned him a room on the second floor front, which he usually occupied. Douglass was a frequent visitor to the café, and I saw him in Mr. Sterling's company on several occasions. Two days after the deceased's arrival he told me he was going to get his life insured. He was in the hotel café with Douglass at the time. At his request I went to the bank and had a check for three thousand five hundred dollars cashed for him. I returned to the hotel, gave him the money, and that is the last I ever saw of him."

Q. "When did Sterling leave the hotel?"

A. "The date on the hotel register is March 21."

Q. "Did Sterling have much baggage with him?"

A. "He had a large trunk."

Addison Day, the day clerk of the hotel, was called. He said he had known the deceased for several years. He was on duty on the morning of March 21, and Sterling paid to him the amount of his bill.

Q. "Did any conversation take place between you at the time?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "What did he say?"

A. "He said that he was going to the house of a friend to visit for a few days, and then he intended to return to his home in Louisville."

Q. "Did he mention the name of his friend?"

A. "He did not."

Q. "Was he alone when he paid the bill?"

A. "He was."

Q. "Did he give you any instructions in regard to his trunk?"

A. "No. He asked me to call a cab, which I did, and he left the hotel, taking his trunk with him."

Q. "What is the name of the man who drove the cab?"

A. "He was called Shorty Jack. I never knew any other name."

Q. "Is he still employed as a cab driver?"

A. "Not as a hotel cab driver."

Q. "Do you know where he is to be found?"

A. "I do not. The detectives asked me about him. They have been trying to find him."

Q. "Was he discharged from the hotel?"

A. "He was not. He left last June of his own accord."

When the son of the murdered man was then called to the stand a murmur of subdued but unmistakable sympathy went through the room. He seemed a noble-minded, refined and attractive young man about twenty-six years old. He was naturally a bright, cheerful-looking young fellow, but the lines which suffering and anxiety had wrought were plainly to be seen.

Nick Carter was drawn to him at once. He had been carefully scanning the young man's face from the time he entered the room.

The district attorney was evidently also in sympathy with Edward Sterling. He asked the questions as carefully as possible, not to harrow up his feelings more than was necessary.

Young Sterling answered them in a clear, frank tone. He kept his feelings under control, but occasionally his face would flush and his eyes fill with moisture for an instant.

He testified in regard to his father's leaving home in Louisville, and the letters which he had received from him from C——. His father had a considerable sum of money with him and some valuable jewelry.

He told about his interview with George Douglass when he came to look for his father. He had visited police headquarters and had called on all of his father's acquaintances in the city, but none of them could give him any satisfaction. Then he went back to Douglass' office and had found it closed and ascertained that no one could tell him what had become of Douglass.

Q. (Displaying the trousers taken from the de-

ceased.) "Do you identify these as belonging to your father?"

A. "I do."

Q. "And this undershirt?"

A. "I am positive my father never wore a garment like that. All his underwear was fine light-gray wool, with his name stamped on it. It was a little fad of my father's to have his name stamped on his things."

Q. "These teeth?"

A. "They were my father's, to the best of my knowledge and belief."

Q. "This jackknife."

A. "My father never carried such a knife."

Q. "Not to your knowledge?"

A. "I am positive he did not. He was peculiar in his likes and dislikes."

Edward Sterling left the stand and took a seat beside Nick.

No more testimony was taken, and the coroner proceeded to deliver his charge to the jury.

He said that there could be no doubt that the deceased had met a violent death. The evidence was slight, it was true, but it was sufficient to convince him that Henry Sterling had been murdered. The jury must draw its own inference as to who had committed the crime. It was not probable that Sterling had committed suicide.

The jury retired for deliberation at two o'clock, and ten minutes later returned with the following verdict:

"That Henry Sterling died on some day between March 21 and July 15, in some place unknown to the jury, from the effects of gas poisoning, administered by some person unknown; and the jury strongly believe that James Douglass had felonious knowledge of the murder, inasmuch as he and his accomplice, Nolan Jenner, collected the insurance."

As soon as the verdict was read Nick Carter turned to Edward Sterling, and said:

"Will you accompany me to my room at the hotel? I want to talk with you for a short time."

"I will, Mr. Carter," Sterling replied. "If I can render you any help I will be more than glad to do so. Now that I am aware that you are working on this case, I feel certain that my father's murderers will be captured. I felt rather discouraged before."

Nick left Edward for a few moments and talked earnestly with the district attorney. When Nick did leave the court room with Sterling, he carried with him a package which contained the effects taken from the murdered man. What he intended to do with these things he kept to himself. Would they furnish a clew? On the witness stand the son of the dead man had sworn that the undershirt and the jackknife were not his father's property. Then to whom had these things belonged? Had they been owned by the assassin?

CHAPTER II.

QUEER DREAMS AND A LUCKY FIND.

When Nick Carter and Edward Sterling entered the room at the hotel and took seats opposite each other at a table, which was covered with papers and documents, Nick lighted a fine cigar and handed another to his companion. After one or two good whiffs Nick said:

"Mr. Sterling, this is one of the most remarkable cases I have ever undertaken to solve. It is one, too, in which the public are taking a great interest. The frauds that have been practiced upon the insurance companies by the villains engaged in this are gigantic. The public does not know half."

"Mr. Carter," asked the young man, "do you think my father was murdered while he was asleep?"

"It is possible. He may have been enticed to some house and after he had undressed and gotten into bed, the room may have been filled with gas. I have already gotten the search for that cab driver well started. If he can be found it will help greatly. He was an honest fellow, his employers say."

The great detective and Sterling talked for some time, and after the young fellow left, Nick sat plunged in thought. Then he made a most careful examination of the articles in the package. He found that the jackknife was almost perfectly new. The steel was fine and the handle of peculiar form. He proposed to find out where this was bought and who bought it. Upon

the undershirt he found a little mark, which under the magnifying glass proved to be a letter plainly printed upon it. A flood of thought filled Nick's mind. Was he upon the track of the criminal so soon?

The shirt and penknife had belonged to the same person!

Nick was startled from his thoughts by a loud rap at his door. He found standing there a rather rough-looking man, who was still an honest sort of fellow in his appearance. Beside him stood a feeble-looking young woman whose large brown eyes had a staring expression so unusual as to awaken curiosity as to her condition.

Nick asked them to come in, and he closed the door before speaking. In fact, before he spoke, the man, in an apologetic tone, said:

"Mr. Carter, I hope you will excuse us for taking your time, but nothing would quiet my daughter here but to bring her to you." He stopped in an embarrassed manner, and she said:

"It is because I can help you about this murder case that I would come."

The girl looked about ready to drop, and Nick told them to sit down and rest a little. Then Nick said:

"I am ready to hear you, madam."

The girl's face flushed as she said:

"I read in the papers that you were trying to unearth the insurance frauds." She paused a moment.

"Do you know anything about those frauds?" asked Nick.

"My husband and I worked in Douglass' office!"

Nick looked rather incredulously at her, and her voice rose almost to a cry as she said:

"This is my father; my husband is dead—yes, murdered by that villain!"

"What proof have you?" Nick asked in his coolest tone. He pitied the girl and wanted to calm her.

"Because I have seen two of his murders committed."

Nick sprang to his feet.

"Is your daughter in her right mind?" he asked.

"Yes, so far as we know. She has always had these dreams."

"Dreams?"

"Yes. Just let her tell it her way if you have the time."

Nick ordered some lunch brought to the room for them all. He insisted upon their eating, then he said:

"Now to business."

"My husband and I," said the young woman, "were both working as clerks in Douglass' office. I had learned shorthand and typewriting, and we wanted to work together to pay for a little home. We did not get much salary, but together we managed pretty well. One night Robert went back to the office for something he had left there. He did not come back. I did not begin to worry until one o'clock. I thought he might be doing some of his to-morrow's work, but by half-past two I was so frightened that I shook all over. I was alone. I did not dare go out, and I kept telling myself that I was foolish, and that it was all right. But in my heart I knew that something had happened to him. Strangely enough, I fell asleep; I commenced to dream. Mr. Carter, I will tell you."

The poor thing shivered as if with cold, but she went steadily on:

"I saw my husband with his death-white face. I heard him cry 'Farewell, Alice.' For a moment he faded from my sight, then I saw him standing in a bare room. He seemed to be trying to pull something from his neck. Suddenly the floor went down. I saw him dropping until he fell into a great vat. It was filled with a white substance. It began to boil and steam, and he had disappeared entirely. I awoke screaming, and as soon as it was daylight I went to my father's and told them. They tried to make me think it was only a dream. But I know it was true. My father went to Douglass, but he denied knowing anything of my husband, and he tried to make my father think that Robert had left me."

"He didn't, though," put in the father.

"Yesterday one of the agents of an insurance company came to me with papers to which my name was signed, and asked me if I had received the insurance upon Robert's life. It was two thousand dollars. I did not know that his life had been insured. Then we

learned that Douglass had collected the insurance and forged my name to the papers."

She stopped, overcome with her memories.

Nick said, kindly:

"This will be a good point for us, and we will do our best to have justice done."

"Perhaps she'd better tell you of that other dream. I don't go much on them myself, but she's always had queer ones."

"Well," said Nick, in his usual kindly way, "she might tell us another if it has anything to do with insurance frauds."

"I did not think about it until I saw the picture of this Mr. Sterling in the papers. I dreamed that he, too, was taken just where my poor husband was. I saw two men drive away with a trunk and stopped before what looked like a row of flats. I saw the poor man on a bed, his face all distorted and purple. I saw two men come in and take away his clothing. They put a different undershirt on him, and one of them put a knife into the pocket of the trousers the dead man had on."

"Can you draw a picture of that knife as you saw it in your dream?"

"I can." Nick gave her pencil and paper. He was interested, for no picture had been given in any newspaper of that knife. With a few outline strokes she drew a good picture of the peculiar knife.

"It had a letter scratched on a plate, but I am not certain what the letter was," she said.

Nick looked at her keenly. It was evident that the girl had some kind of second sight or something, he did not know what. But he made up his mind to question her pretty closely.

"What did the men do with the man after he was dead?"

"They picked the body up and carried it down an iron staircase. They took it to what seemed to be a large vault. One was a tall man and one was short. They did not agree, and one tried to throw the other. They struggled and fell. The tall man conquered and strangled the smaller one." Here the girl almost fainted. Her father said to her, softly:

"Don't try to tell any more of it." And as she covered her eyes, as if to shut out the horrors they beheld, he went on for her:

"She told us she saw in her dream the tall man throw the other into the big tank in the room. That was all, for she awoke, and she has been a nervous wreck ever since."

"About what date did you have this dream?" asked Nick.

"The twenty-first of March," said the girl.

"Mr. Carter, do you believe that my dreams were true?" She asked it almost wildly.

"I cannot say. We will hope that long before these men were done away with that they were unconscious of their doom or their misery."

There was that in the girl's face to excite the compassion of a harder man than Nick. He thanked her and her father for coming to him. He ordered a carriage to take them home. He told them he would help them in any way he could and dismissed them.

Nick had just settled down to think over many of the strange phases that presented themselves to his imagination, when the door was thrown violently open and Edward Sterling staggered into the room, and sank exhausted upon the bed!

When Nick ran to him he found that Sterling had fainted, and he worked over him for some time before he recovered. It was fully ten minutes before Edward opened his eyes. They fell upon Nick.

"I am safe," he said, in a lifeless voice.

"Indeed, you are safe. We can have an army of police here if necessary at a moment's notice."

"It's a miracle that I am here."

"What was the trouble?" asked Nick.

"Three men tried to kidnap me. I gave them a pretty good tussle."

"Let me hear just what happened."

"When I left you I started for my hotel. A young man accosted me when I was about half way there. He called me by name, and I thought his voice sounded familiar. But when I turned I saw that I did not know him at all. He asked me if I were not the son of Henry Sterling. Then he stated that he had been

in a saloon and had heard two men talking about my father. He heard one of them say that he had valuable information for which the police would pay well. He said he listened hard then, for he had been in the court room when I gave my testimony, and had felt sorry for me. He thought he would listen and then look me up at some hotel and let me know. He saw me then and recognized me at once. He said they were still in the saloon or he thought they were. He suggested that we just look in and see if they were there, and if they were I could make up my mind whether I wanted to speak to them or not. It sounded plausible enough. I, like a fool, suspected nothing, and went in with him."

The young fellow seemed so used up physically and mentally that Nick forced him to stop and take a good big glass of milk which he had ordered for him.

"There was no one in the front part of the saloon when we went in. The bartender came out of a back room and asked the fellow with me if we would have something. We said no, and my conductor asked where the men were who were standing at the bar when he stepped out. The bartender pointed to the back room, and we went in. Two well-dressed men were sitting at a table. My companion told them who I was.

"'I know a great deal about this matter, I am sorry to say,' said one of the men. 'Sit down and we will talk it over.' I sat down, and in an instant all was confusion. Some one behind me tried to slip something over my head. When I got a look at the fellow it was my friend who had felt sorry for me. I fought them like wildfire, but they nearly did me up. The front door was locked. I made a sprint for the side door and managed to get hold of a chair, and in a moment of wild confusion I got it open and ran out on the street. I heard two shots fired after me, but I ran like a deer toward the light and they dared not follow."

"Did you see any policeman near?"

"I did not."

"Do you think you could find that saloon again?"

"I could go straight to it."

"Would you be able to recognize those men again?"

"Certainly I would."

"Do you feel strong enough to go with me now?"

"I do."

"I have no hope of finding any of your assailants there, but I want to see the place."

Nick fitted up two complete suits which disguised them completely. He knew that action was best for the young man, for he was nervously exhausted. Nick said very little. He instructed Sterling before they left the hotel just what he was to say and do. The place had a respectable appearance and decent surroundings. It did not look like a resort of thugs. What could have been the motive of those men? The door was opened wide. The lights were burning brightly.

"We will go in," said Nick, in a low tone.

They took seats at a side table and called for drinks. No one of the number gathered there seemed to notice them in any way. As soon as they were served Nick asked:

"Do you recognize any of these men as your assailants?"

"I do not," replied Edward. "And the bartender is a different man."

"I thought so."

"What are you going to do?"

"We will remain a short time."

They sat talking in undertones for a time, and the detective listened to snatches of talk, but learned nothing from it. They went out after a while, and when they had gone a short distance Nick said:

"Sterling, I want you to return to your hotel and remain there till I call."

"Where are you going?" asked Edward, as if he hated to lose sight of Nick.

"I am going right back to that saloon."

They said good-night, and Nick marched straight back into the saloon. Nick did not take a seat at a table; he stood up beside the bar. A man who was near him said to the bartender:

"Who was making a target of that door?" pointing

to a bullet hole in the center of the door which had the glass broken in it.

"A row took place here before I came on," Mike, the bartender, answered.

"Who was in it?"

"Them strange chaps."

"What were they up to?"

"I couldn't find out from Tim Blake. He was quite excited when I came on, and when he was about leaving he told me to tell the boss to get some one else in his place."

"Was any one hurt?"

"I don't know."

"Did you ask the Twin?"

"You mean Tim Blake?"

"Yes, didn't you know the boys named him that? He and a young fellow he says is his brother are generally hanging around together."

"I questioned him, but I didn't get any satisfaction out of him."

"He is a curious duck."

"I don't know. He worked here only about three weeks. He came from old Shaggs' place. The toughest place in this city."

"This fellow will bear looking up and watching," thought Nick.

He went out then to look about a little. As he stepped outside his quick ear caught a low and peculiar whistle. He slid quietly into a shaded place, quickly made a few telling changes in his disguise, and then moved in the direction of the whistle which had been repeated three times.

The night had become as black as pitch. Once in a while a flash of lightning lit up the street. During one of these flashes Nick caught sight of two men earnestly talking. Cautiously he drew near; he heard one say:

"I got the watch all right. You were a fool to let such evidence lie around loose. Suppose some fly cop had got it."

"How could a fly cop get hold of it?"

"That muss in the saloon has set every sport in the neighborhood talking."

"What'd they say?"

The younger of the two men gave a detailed account of what had occurred in the saloon.

"I'll get square with Flint and Rogers for that."

"Be careful what you do, Tim," said the other.

"I'll be careful, all right."

"You ought not to have made such an open strike at the young cove."

"It wasn't my doings."

"Whose was it, then?"

"It was Nolan's."

"He'd better lay low."

The thunder grew loud and drowned the rest of the talk. The men moved slowly away and Nick started for his hotel.

"Nolan!" he said or thought. "Can it be that he is the partner of James Douglass and still in this city?

"The police had no description of this man. His picture was in no rouges' gallery. This fact may have made him bold. I would give my own fine watch to get hold of that one." He made up his mind to turn and follow the fellows he had been listening to when they caught up with him. Then it was that Nick Carter tried that old game of the thief. Turning quickly, he said:

"Pardon me, gentlemen, can you tell me the time? I want to get a train."

The old man said, gruffly:

"I have no watch."

Just as he spoke the younger one in some spirit of bravado drew out the coveted watch. Quick as a flash Nick had seized it and started on a run. He turned the first corner and tore off his false toggings and was immediately a transformed, quiet gentleman, going about his own business. He knew that the men would not dare make an outcry, if the watch were what he suspected, the property of the murdered man.

With muttered oaths the older man had clutched the other and ordered him to fly. They separated, and each went rapidly in different directions.

Great was the joy of Nick Carter when he gained his own room, and, carefully locking his door, he examined

the watch. With the help of a magnifying glass he traced, without difficulty, the name of Henry Sterling, though it had been partially scratched out.

CHAPTER III.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

The next morning early Nick went to the hotel where Edward Sterling was staying.

"Sterling, did you ever see this watch before?" Nick asked him, suddenly.

The young fellow started as if he had been struck.

"My poor father!" he cried.

He took the watch tenderly in his hand and held it, while he covered his eyes with his hand. Nick sat in silence, his own eyes moist.

"Where did you get it, Mr. Carter?" he asked.

Nick gave him a description of the man and told the whole story.

"Now," said Nick, "I know that this sad business is wearing on you terribly. I am going to set you to work. I have sent for a young friend of mine who will instruct you in some ways of ours.

"You can be of great assistance."

The young fellow brightened up at this. Nick took the watch back with him and locked it up in his room with the rest of the murdered man's belongings.

That night Nick, proceeding on information Chick, his clever assistant, had given him, went thoroughly disguised into a gambling house where he had reason to think he might learn something to his advantage.

It sometimes seemed that fortune itself favored Nick. He had been in the place a short time only when he saw Tim Blake seated at a table alone. He watched Tim have one or two wordy encounters with some of his acquaintances, and evidently something was restraining him from pitching in and having a fight. Nick heard him say once, to one:

"I'll pay you yet. I owe you several." What, then, the detective asked himself, was keeping him here so evidently restless and ill at ease?

Half an hour passed and still Tim sat there. At last Nick saw his eyes brighten. He followed their gaze and saw that a tall man in plain, dark clothes had entered the hall. The man stepped up to the table at which Tim was sitting, and Nick got a good look at him.

He was about forty years old, of muscular appearance, and his face was well covered with a black beard. He wore a slouch hat, which was pulled down well over his eyes. The practiced eye of Nick saw at a glance that the man was disguised.

"Here's mischief?" said Nick, in an under breath. The man leaned across the table and said something to Blake very earnestly. He then turned and walked straight out of the room. A few moments later Blake followed, and it is needless to say that Nick Carter followed Blake. Nick stopped in the shadow of the doorway long enough to change his beard and mustache.

"What detained you?" Nick heard Blake ask the man.

"I was making an investigation," the man replied.

"Did you find out anything?"

"I did," the man answered, impressively.

"What?"

"That Nick Carter knows of the assault on the Sterling cub."

"The deuce you say."

"He is on your trail!"

"You can't mean it!"

"I was never more serious in my life."

"How did you find out these things?"

"When Sterling escaped I followed him. He went direct to the hotel where the detective is stopping. I saw him go to the very room. I could not hear, but I know he saw enough to make it hot for you."

"Oh, oh, I'd rather the Evil One was after me."

"I saw them leave the hotel that night and go straight to the saloon. They went away, and the detective came back. I'm certain he heard you and your brother."

At all events, Nick was hearing this conversation. He had crawled up into an empty wagon near where these men were standing. He lay flat upon his stomach and heard every word.

"You needn't be so scared. He isn't around here."

"How do you know that?" the trembling wretch responded. "He's everywhere, and always here and there and everywhere," he gasped.

"I went to his hotel before coming here. I tell you, you need not be so afraid. I asked for him, and the clerk offered to send up my card. I made some excuse and made tracks for you."

"The clerk may have made a mistake."

"I think not."

"Well, let's go where we can talk this thing over in safety, if there is such a place."

"We'll go to Best's."

The two men walked off. After they had turned the corner Nick crawled down from the wagon and followed. The bartender was busy when Nick walked into the saloon and went through and took a seat in a back room. He partly closed the door and kept his ears open. He heard voices. He scarcely dared to hope that they were of the men he wanted. He placed his ear against the thin partition and listened.

Nick could hear the clink of glasses and hear Nolan, as Black called him repeatedly, until warned not to do so, saying:

"I acknowledged that there is some danger, but not enough to make a man tremble and quake. You might as well go and give yourself up if you are so sure of being caught."

"I have as much sand as you have."

"Then why don't you show it? When I told you Nick Carter was after you you turned white and green.

"I believe that if the police got you, you would give the whole thing away. It is well I didn't tell you everything. You can't tell what you don't know.

"If you were arrested you couldn't do anything to me. You only know me as Nolan. You could not give them one really valuable clew. So you see it will pay you to play fair."

"Haven't I played fair and square?"

"So far."

"Well, what more can any man do? What more do you want?"

"A good deal."

"See here, Nolan, I have been thinking of quitting."

"You'll not quit."

"Why won't I?"

"Because I will not let you."

"Am I your slave?"

"You are. If you say another word I will see that you are in a cell before to-morrow night."

Nick heard him give a smothered groan.

"What is it you want done?"

"Nick Carter must be got rid of as well as your young Sterling."

At this Nick himself started. Did these wretches hesitate at nothing?

This man was no common thug to sit and calmly plan the murder of two men, both in the public eye at the present moment, and one so well known to all manner of men connected with the detection of crime. These thoughts coursed through his brain like lightning.

"You expect me to do both jobs?"

"I will secure some one to help you."

"And you will do nothing?"

"I will pay you well for your work."

"That is what you always say. You promised to give me big boodle out of that Sterling job, but when the time comes I am stood off. I didn't get a thing but the watch."

"What did you do?"

"You know what I did. I did what I was told."

"You gave Sterling knockout drops in his drink, that was all."

"Wasn't that enough?"

"Didn't I give you five hundred dollars last week?"

"It wasn't enough. You couldn't have got him away with you if I hadn't given them to him."

"We will not waste time on this. What you have got to do—mind, got to do—is to entice this Nick Carter to some place where he can be laid out. You can think the thing over to-night, and be prepared to present a plan in the morning."

"Where?"

"To your corner."

"I won't go there to-night."

"Where will you go?"

"To Badger's."

"All right; I'll send you a message there. Now, I'm off."

"I'm dead broke."

"Anything new?"

"Luck ag'in me."

Nick heard a little rustle of bills.

"You stay here five minutes," Nolan ordered.

"Why can't I go with you?"

"Because I do not want you to. Don't care for your company."

Nick heard the fellow open the door into the compartment on the other side, as if looking to see that they had not been overheard. Nick had found out a great deal. This Tim Blake was only a weak tool in the hands of this cunning, perfectly unscrupulous man. Who was he? Could it be that he was Douglass himself? Nick did not believe it, for Douglass was a short man, and this one was very tall.

Nick got out safely and unobserved. He hid behind a pile of boxes. He watched the entrances and was rewarded as he hoped to be. He felt certain that Nolan would leave this place with great caution. Good luck, so often on Nick's side, decreed that Nick should see him as he came out.

Nolan stopped for a time on the corner to make sure no one was on the lookout, then he went leisurely away.

Nick found it difficult work to track him. He was not dealing with an ordinary person who made the usual little feints and dodges. Nick had here a foe worthy of his steel, as he confessed to himself. Down into the slum district he led Nick. Sometimes the detective even lost sight of him. At last Nolan felt safe. He did not look behind so often or make so many circuits.

Up and down they went until they neared the lake. What is the man doing? They were only a hundred feet apart when Nolan stopped down and lifted what appeared to be the cover of a sewer manhole.

Nick was simply amazed at what followed.

Nolan pushed the cover to one side, lowered himself into the opening and then pulled the cover over again.

As soon as he disappeared the detective rushed forward and reached the spot in a few seconds. It did not take him long to discover that his surmise was correct. Nolan had gone down into the manhole which opened into the sewer.

Nick raised the cover of the manhole. He looked down, but could see nothing. He listened, but not a sound reached his ears. He drew his dark lantern out of his pocket and flashed it around. Still he made no discovery.

"I am going down," he muttered, and the next instant he commenced to descend. He reached the bottom without any mishap and found himself in a large sewer.

The water was only a foot deep, and on each side of it was a brick pathway. The detective looked about him and saw that the sewer emptied itself into the lake. He examined the walls of solid masonry.

What had become of Nolan? Nick owned himself puzzled. He found no tracks. He followed the course of the sewer for several blocks, but found no trail or trace of the man he was following. Nick spent two hours in the search, and not until he was almost tired out did he return to the manhole and assend to the street. "I will keep the exact location of this place in my mind," he muttered, as he replaced the manhole. "I'm on that rascal's trail, and he will conquer or I will. He must have escaped through some opening. It is cleverly concealed. But I will find it."

Nick sent a messenger to Chick immediately upon arriving at the hotel and Chick came hurrying in.

"I have made some discoveries which call for your help, Chick. We have a man as smart as we are, both of us combined, I guess. Our disguises must be perfect."

They left the hotel together, and after they were out on the street Chick said:

"Where are we going, Nick?"

"To a little hotel where we will stay to-night, as in

the morning I want to put you to work in that neighborhood."

"What kind of work?"

"Wait and see."

"All right, Mr. Detective. I am a soldier and know how to take orders and obey them."

"We will get a few hours' sleep and then we will start in."

CHAPTER IV.

CHICK POINTS THE WAY.

Nick was the first to awake the next morning. Not a word did he say about business until they had eaten their breakfast.

"Now Chick, you may not like this job. It will test your patience greatly, though I have given it a good many pretty severe tests already."

"Well," said Chick, laughing, "I have not flunked yet, have I?"

"Never," said Nick, in the cordial way that endeared him to Chick.

"The assignment is to watch a sewer manhole."

"I'll watch as a cat does a rat."

"You are not only to watch it, but you are to follow any one who comes out of it. I must have this man, Chick. It is a case of my having him or of his having me."

Nick smiled. Chick looked at him closely, but could not tell if he meant it seriously. Though he understood perfectly from Nick's manner that it was a most grave and weighty work he had undertaken. They left the hotel together and strolled off toward the lake. They reached the spot where Nick had seen Nolan disappear.

Nick instructed Chick in all his duties, promising to see him later in the day. Then he departed.

Nick believed that on this man hung all the case of the great insurance frauds. He had acted in every way like a man who had the ordering of others. He was evidently a powerful and dangerous man to deal with.

After leaving Chick Nick started to continue his inquiries concerning some of Douglass' friends. One of these, a Dr. Trownville, had been mentioned several times. He kept a drug store and Nick concluded to call there and see how things looked about it. He had an idea that this doctor knew a great deal about Douglass, and on account of their intimacy it was possible that the doctor might know of his whereabouts.

He had secured a description of Trownville and would be able, he felt sure, to recognize him without asking any questions.

As he entered the store he saw at once standing beside the prescription case a man who answered the description perfectly. Nick walked up to him and bought a box of pills. After he had paid for them he began to ask some questions about the sights to be seen in the city, as if he were a stranger. The doctor answered all the questions pleasantly and had no idea that he was talking with one of the brightest detectives in America.

As Nick and the doctor were talking a young fellow came in and walked up to the doctor, as if with a message. The doctor's face clouded, and he turned away with so slight a sign of annoyance that no one but a detective would have noticed it.

"He'll bear watching," thought Nick.

Nick started for the door, when, as if struck with a sudden thought, he turned back:

"Have you a directory, doctor?" he asked, breaking into the conversation of the two men, as if by accident.

"You'll find it on the table by the door," the doctor answered.

Nick thought his tone decidedly crusty.

An animated conversation was going on, but Nick could not hear one word. Looking to see that no one observed him, he inserted in his ear a little tube which had been presented to him by the inventor. It was not much larger than a lead pencil, and the idea of it was to have it pass for one. Nick had used it successfully many times. He kept his eyes fastened upon the directory.

"You must not talk above a whisper, Louis; that man may be all right, but he may not be."

Nick's features were immovable, though with the help of the little instrument he heard them perfectly.

"He's nothing but some Western guy. He isn't any one to be afraid of."

"I'm not so sure. I am afraid of every stranger who comes in. I know that detectives have been here in disguise, and have questioned the clerks about Douglass. They have even asked me things, but they got no satisfaction."

"I'll bet that old fellow has dust and would be a fat one to pluck."

"Stop," said the doctor; "you must not say such things. The slightest incautious remark might turn suspicion toward us."

"Have you the money?" asked Louis. "I am anxious to get it off and get through with this business."

"Here it is."

The doctor handed him a package, which he hurriedly put into his pocket.

"Did you write to Douglass?" asked the doctor.

"I did. It is all right so far."

"I'm greatly obliged to you, doctor," said Nick, looking toward the doctor and closing the book.

"Don't mention it," he said pleasantly to Nick. "Remain here until that man has gone out," Nick heard him say to the young fellow. "I'll drop in again." said Nick, and left the store. His eyes shone like stars with satisfaction. He went into the side door of a saloon near by and into the toilet room. In a few minutes he came out, his appearance entirely changed.

He purchased a cigar and left the place. He saw the young fellow the doctor had called Louis just turning a corner. Looking back he saw the doctor standing in the store door, evidently watching to see if Louis was followed. Nick kept out of range until the doctor turned his back, then he followed fast after Louis.

Nick was elated. He had found out that these people knew where Douglass was and were sending him money. The questions Nick asked himself were, what connection did this doctor have with Douglass? How could he trace out the links that bound them together?

Trownville had the name of a good citizen, was a man of considerable wealth, and many people considered his word as good as his bond.

Louis took a street car and Nick got on the rear platform. The young fellow seemed, as Nick watched him, to be perfectly at ease, for he did not display any nervousness. He must be a hard one, thought Nick.

According to all accounts the insurance swindlers had collected over eighty-six thousand dollars from the companies. Suppose Douglass to have had only half of it, he must have had a large sum of money when he went off. He went so suddenly that he probably left most of it in some friend's keeping. Was that friend this Dr. Trownville? As Louis left the car and hurried into an express office Nick followed. He watched from the outside. When Louis came out Nick saw him tear the receipt into a thousand pieces.

Nick did not follow any farther. He went into the express office, and displaying his badge, he asked the clerk to let him see the package Louis had just left there.

The clerk, after looking at the detective's badge, made no objection and handed the package to Nick.

Nick read with eagerness the address:

"John Martin, No. — Hemlock Street, Philadelphia, Pa."

"Thank you," said Nick, handing back the parcel; "when will this reach Philadelphia?"

"To-morrow night," said the clerk; "it will be delivered the next morning early."

Nick went without the loss of a moment to a telegraph office, and sent the following dispatch to the chief of the Bureau of Public Safety in that city:

"Arrest John Martin of No. — Hemlock Street; wanted for murder. He is the notorious James Douglass. Communicate with me as soon as arrest is made. CARTER."

When he had sent this message he returned to the place where he had left Chick.

It took him half an hour to reach the place.

He was surprised to see no trace of him.

Nick was anxious. Had anything happened? No, it was more likely that Chick was on the trail of some one. As this thought struck him he glanced down at the cover of the manhole, near which he was standing. He discovered that it was slightly out of place. It had evidently been moved and replaced in a hurry.

"Some one has come out of there in haste and Chick has followed him. Hello! here is a chalk hand. What does this mean?"

A hand was drawn in chalk on the top of a block near the manhole. The finger pointed toward a board fence in front of a vacant lot. Nick examined the hand carefully and discovered in very small letters the initials of Chick.

"Good boy!" said Nick. "He drew this hand to guide me. Hardly any one in the world would have seen it. He knew that when I found him gone I would examine every inch of the ground. Well, the finger points to the fence, and I must follow the sign."

Nick walked in a straight line toward the fence, keeping his eyes fixed upon the ground. Upon the curb he found a small cross. In the center he found another one. Upon the stone near the fence he found an arrow marked out. It pointed to a small opening in the board. Nick looked through the opening, and saw a cobble stone with a cross chalked on the top. He thrust his hand through the opening, pushed the stone away, and then he felt a piece of paper on the ground. He drew it out. It was a part of an envelope and he read in Chick's handwriting this message:

"Eleven-forty-five; man came out; dressed like a laborer; tall; black beard. Am off."

Nick tore the note up and made some change in his disguise.

"While the boy is trailing the fellow I am going down to inspect that sewer."

In five minutes more Nick had descended into the sewer.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRETS OF THE SEWER.

Nick made up his mind that he would discover the secrets of this hiding place. The night he made the other examination he was tired and his brain was fagged. But to-day he felt as bright as if he had never been fatigued. He went about his search in a methodical manner.

He took out his dark lantern from his pocket, lit it and commenced to inspect the walls. He did not waste time in his work, for he readily saw that there was not much chance for any one to conceal anything here.

He then proceeded to the main part of the sewer. The tide was low, and there was very little water in the sewer. This helped him very much. He glanced at his watch and calculated in this way:

"It is now twelve-fifteen. Chick's note stated that the man left the sewer at eleven-forty-five. Half an hour has passed. Not enough for all tracks to have vanished. Last night the water in the trough was two feet deep, and I think the fellow waded through it. Now the water is not half a foot in depth, and the bottom is muddy.

"He would not care to appear in the street with his boots or shoes covered with mud and slime. I see no evidence of mud on the walls of the shaft where there would have been if he had walked through the water and there had been mud on his shoes.

"He did not wade through the water.

"He must have walked along one side on the bricks."

When Nick reached this conclusion he started to inspect the brick walks or paths. For several feet he crawled along on the left side of the trough and examined the bricks.

"Nothing on this side," concluded Nick, and changed to the right side. Hardly had the rays of the lantern shone upon the bricks when Nick gave a smile of satisfaction. Bending down he saw the print of a foot in the green mold which covered the tops of the bricks. It was a long and narrow print and it pointed in the direction of the shaft. Looking closely, he found other prints all pointing in the same direction.

Some were hardly visible, others were quite distinct. Some of them were only half prints, showing that the man had walked on tiptoe a good share of the way. Nick followed the tracks for two blocks. Then they came to an abrupt end. Peer as he would, he found no more. He straightened up and on his face was a look of determination. Nick would never give up this hunt until successful. He found no sign of any opening in the wall.

"That man is no laborer," he mused. "He made one mistake in his makeup. A sewer laborer would have worn hob-nailed shoes, with broad, flat soles. This man's shoes are fine ones, and nearly or quite new; the tracks are so even and not imperfect as the print of old shoes would have been. The question I must answer is, where did he get in? He did not drop from the roof, that is certain." Nick's bright eyes wandered over the surface. He ran his hand over it. He would not own to discouragement. The light of his lantern shone on every portion of that wall before he turned back to where he had found the first footprint. With the end of a billy he sounded every brick in the neighborhood. When he reached the row next the wall the first brick he tapped gave forth a hollow sound. Then he discovered that it was loose.

To pry it up was the work of a minute, and as he lifted it up he found a hollow place under it. In the center was a small iron crank.

"At last!" said Nick.

He caught hold of the crank and gave it a turn. Almost instantly it responded to his touch. He heard a slight grating noise behind him. He turned quickly and saw a section of the wall on the left side, which he had not examined, moving outward.

One glance showed him that it was a door.

He put the brick back into place and caught hold of the edge of the door.

A narrow passage was before him, and he stepped into it. The door closed behind him. The passage was of stone and cement. It was about three feet wide and five in height. The floor was of concrete.

Nick walked along until he came to an iron door at the end. He had gone about two hundred feet, and the atmosphere was almost stifling. It was some time before he was able to open the door. The lock was a combination lock, and Nick had tried nearly thirty when he heard the click which announced that he had succeeded. He gave the door a push, and as it slowly opened he entered the large vaulted chamber to which it led.

Nick Carter paused in astonishment at the sight presented. Never in all his experiences had he beheld its counterpart. The man who had planned this room had displayed ingenuity which would have given him fame and fortune if exhibited in the world of honest men. Every contingency that might arise seemed to have been provided for.

A horrible smell pervaded the place. Scattered over the floor were bones and skulls. Nick saw at once that they were human bones. As he went on with his search all of a sudden he recalled the dreams of the young woman who had come to him with her father. "Was this the place? Did her poor young husband meet his fate in this horrible den?" Nick shuddered as he thought of it.

Many people had disappeared from the great city where this infernal place was situated. How many of them had met death here? Nick felt that if necessary he would be willing to risk his own life many times in order to clear up this mystery and rid the world of the monster who had conceived and carried out this diabolical work. At one side Nick now discovered a large steel tank. He stepped upon a block of wood and looked down into it. It was filled with a black, oily substance. An ill-smelling vapor rose from it. Nick was almost overcome by its fumes.

Nick knew a good deal about chemistry, and he felt certain that it contained those elements which would immediately destroy a human body—bones, clothing, buttons, teeth, and all, in a short time. He looked under the tank and saw that a large plug was placed in the tank directly over an opening in the sewer. By pulling this plug the entire contents of the tank would run out and down into the lake.

"This fiend must be a practical chemist?" said Nick. "He has destroyed all evidence of his crimes, but I will

bring forward corroborative evidence against him when I can find out who he is, and where this cellar opens into."

In one corner Nick found a great retort. It was as big as a baker's oven. Nick opened the door and found all the appliances for cremating a body. In another part of the cellar was a bed of quicklime. He poked around in it and found traces of bones.

On one side of it Nick saw a small footprint as if of a woman. Could it be, Nick asked himself, that Douglass had invented all these things, or had he worked in partnership with his mysterious friend whom perhaps at this moment Chick was shadowing?

Near the bed of lime stood a stove. Nick opened the door and drew out a woman's shoe and part of a man's diagonal coat and vest. He examined the vest first. On the lining he found stamped the name Henry Sterling.

Here was conclusive evidence. It connected this chamber of horrors with the death of this man. Nick flushed with joy over this grewsome discovery.

There was nothing on the coat of interest. Nick rolled the thing into a compact bundle and laid them aside.

Nick thought it probable that there was another entrance. He could not reach the ceiling. There was no evidence of a trap of any kind. Nick looked around with an expression of perplexity on his face. "There must be another opening. But it is cleverly concealed."

At last near the retort he saw an iron ring fastened into a stone. He hesitated a moment, then he caught hold of the ring and pulled with all his might. It did not budge. It seemed to be fastened solidly into the masonry. Tug after tug he gave it. He rested a minute, then went at it again. He straightened himself up for a moment and cast his eyes around the room.

"This air is simply horrible," he said. "I couldn't stay here long."

Unconsciously he turned his glance toward the ceiling and sprang to one side, as if forced by some invisible power. If he had hesitated an instant Nick Carter would never have told this story. An iron weight was descending from the ceiling. It was running down a steel wire. It touched the floor with great force. Then, with the regularity of clockwork it began to ascend. So snugly did the weight fit into the ceiling that even Nick's sharp eyes could see no crack.

"A minute more and I would have been done away with here," Nick ejaculated. "I see now the arrangement. When any one pulls on that ring it starts the clockwork and the weight creeps down like a thief in the night." Nick had spoken aloud, an unusual thing. His nerves were highly wrought upon in this place of horrors.

"It behooves one to be mighty careful in this horrible pit."

"All your care will not save you."

These words were fairly hissed in Nick's ear. His lantern was knocked out of his hand. His arms were caught in a powerful grasp, and some one was trying to throw him down.

The lantern was extinguished and Nick was in darkness with his unknown and terrible foe.

He could feel the hot breath of the fiend on his cheek.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHAMBER OF HORRORS.

As Nick bent forward in the man's grasp he practiced one of the tricks of wrestling; he raised his antagonist off his feet and tried to throw him.

The man grappled with him again and laughed.

"Ha! ha! I know that trick as well as you do. You have found your match this time."

Nick thought it quite likely that he had, for, to tell the truth, the man was a good wrestler. Nick realized perfectly that he was in great danger, but it served to calm him. He arose to the occasion. They struggled on in the darkness, and in that deadly air which had weakened Nick a good deal. He tried every trick known to the scientific wrestler. But at last Nick stopped craftily. His opponent gave a low chuckle.

He thought he had downed him. Suddenly Nick dropped down on one knee and gave the rascal a quick grasp around the throat. As he wrenched the villain's neck the man's grasp relaxed, and he let go of Nick. Then Nick dealt him a silencing blow. The man fell backward. Nick heard a groan. He sprang to his feet. He began to search his pockets for matches. He did not hear the slightest sound. He found his match-box and lighted a match which flickered and went out. In that time he could not see where the man was lying, but he did see his lantern. Its face was broken, but otherwise it was all right, and he soon had it lighted. The silence of the grave reigned in this horrible place. Nick held his lantern aloft and looked for his antagonist. To his surprise and even terror, there was no sign of the man.

Nick searched every corner.

What had become of him?

Nick concluded that he must have crawled off into some secret hiding place, finding that he was badly wounded and not able to continue the contest.

"What is this?" cried Nick.

Lines of smoke were pouring into the cellar from spots in the ceiling and wall.

A horrible stifling smell filled the chamber.

Nick knew instantly that it was the fumes of some deadly acid. Nick's eyes burned, his throat began to smart and be dry. He thought his time had come.

"I hate to die like a rat in a trap," exclaimed Nick. "Lucky I have my respirator and a mask with me."

He drew from his pocket a rubber mask which he hastily slipped on. It was like the mask worn by divers, with glasses fitted over the eyes, and a respirator at the top which connected with a little chamber of condensed air. Nick knew he should be in danger in the sewer, and had brought everything that he felt would be of help in emergencies.

This was a new contrivance guaranteed to let one move about in any atmosphere for half an hour. Nick felt that he was about to give it a severe test. Of course, when the air gave out in the chamber, it would be useless. He must make haste to escape if possible, before that happened.

Nick hastily made his way over to the door. He found that it was locked fast. He could make no combination work. His heart sank within him. He wasted fully ten minutes in trying to open the door. It seemed to Nick that he was doomed. He could not see farther than three feet from him. Every moment was so precious that he could not think fast enough. Nick was no coward. He had faced death many a time, but to die in this horrible den! He made a vow that if he escaped alive he would devote every moment of his life to the running down of the devils who had tortured human beings as he was being tortured. He crawled around the fated chamber on his hands and knees, the fumes were not quite so deadly as they were higher up. He sought to find some avenue of escape or to study some means by which he might get a breath of life-giving air.

"I must. I will get out of here," cried Nick. "I am not going to give up."

Only five minutes remained to him. Perhaps only five minutes of life. If it had not been for his mask he would have been one more of the victims of these cowardly devils. How fast the seconds fled away! Nick's temples throbbed. He could almost hear the beating of his heart, and the blood coursing through his veins. The light flickered in his lantern and went out. It had been a wonder that it had burned so long in that deadly air.

In desperation Nick crawled back to the door which led into the passage opening into the sewer, and threw himself against it. He uttered a prayer for deliverance.

Suddenly, when his strength was almost gone, he heard a clicking noise on the other side of the door. Some one was in the passage trying to work the combination.

Nick's heart gave great bounds. It throbbed as it never had in his exciting life! Nick said to himself that he did not care who opened the door, friend or foe, so long as he did open it! He felt the door yielding! A ray of light came in. It meant life to him! With the desperation of a drowning man who sees a rope flung out to him Nick clutched the edge of the

door, struggled to his feet and staggered out into the passage. A cry of joy sounded in his ears as he sank to the ground.

The door swung to with a bang, for Nick had pulled it out with him. He had enough strength left to pull the mask off his face, and although the air was heavy in the passage Nick found it reviving and life-giving. His eyes were dim and he could not see who lifted him up and carried him along the passage. When the end of the passage was reached and Nick was carried into the sewer, he heard the welcome voice of Chick saying:

"Thank God, he is safe!"

Nick leaned against the wall of the sewer, and as his eyes became clear he saw with amazement that accompanying Chick was the man who had come to his room at the hotel with his daughter. With him was a delicate-looking young boy.

It seemed to him that his rescue had been almost a miracle.

"Let's go out of the sewer," said Chick, breaking the silence.

"Yes," replied Nick; "it isn't safe to stay here a second. We must not stop to talk here. Let us go."

"I'll help you, sir," said the older man.

"I don't need any assistance," said Nick, "I am all right now. Couldn't have said that five minutes ago."

They made their way down the sewer until they reached the manhole. A rope was dangling from the top. Chick climbed up it.

When Chick reached the top he lowered the rope and Nick tied it about the waist of the boy, and he was drawn to the top. The two men followed, and then they were all together on the street. All noted the fortunate circumstance that there was not a person in sight when this party of four emerged from the sewer.

"A good omen," said Nick; "let's hurry to the hotel."

"I've got a buggy around the corner," said Chick.

"Is any one in it?" Nick inquired.

"No. I left it alone; tied the horse to the hitching post."

They reached the buggy without meeting any one and drove off to the hotel. On the way back Nick changed his disguise somewhat so that he would not look in any way remarkable. They entered the hotel by a side door and soon were in Nick's room.

Before this time it is needless to say that Nick had recognized in the slender boy the dreaming daughter of the man who had come to his rescue with Chick.

"First of all, Chick," said Nick, "I want to hear your report. No time must be lost."

"Let me see," mused Chick, "did you find my note?" he asked, after a moment's reflection.

"I did."

"Then you know that I started after a man who was dressed as a laborer who came up out of the sewer?"

"I do."

"I followed that man, and I had as hard a job as I ever undertook to keep him in sight. He is as foxy a chap as I ever saw. But I managed to keep him in sight, and he did not discover that any one was following him. He went direct to the slums, and went to a saloon. I entered the place, but I did not dare to go near the room where he was talking with a man. I took a good look at the man he was talking with. I am almost sure it was Tim Blake. I cannot be positive, for the fellow was somewhat disguised."

"It was Tim Blake."

"How do you know?"

"Never mind, go on."

"They talked for a while, then the man left. I tracked him and saw him go down into the sewer. I waited a few minutes and then I went down. I could find no trace of him. I wandered up and down, and was about to give up the search, when I saw two people come down the manhole. One of them led the other by the hand. I got close to them and saw that the younger was a woman in male attire; I watched them. The woman walked along the sewer for some time, then she knelt down and raised a brick out of the wall. Then she pulled something. I was astonished to see a part of the wall open. I asked the man what they were doing. He told me not to speak, but to hold the door open. The woman appeared to be walking in her sleep. She and the man entered the passage. Now

my story is done. The man and woman were Mr. Grant and his daughter."

Before Nick made any comment, the girl, looking timidly at him, said:

"If you are willing I would like to tell my part of the story now."

Nick said, in his kind and reassuring way:

"Certainly, we will be glad to have you."

"I was at home lying on the lounge asleep when I began to have one of those dreadful dreams. I saw you, Mr. Carter, just as plainly as I do now. I saw you going down to the bottom of a sewer. I could see the location of the place, the manhole and all. I saw you traverse the sewer, and then pry up the brick in the walk. You entered the passage and then opened the door. I saw you go into that chamber of horrors. And Mr. Carter! It was the place I had described to you! I saw everything that you did. Then I saw a man enter the passage; he commenced to open the door. I noticed every number on the combination upon which that lock was set. The numbers seemed burned into my brain."

The poor girl passed her hand over her eyes with a pathetic look and then went on.

"I saw him look into the chamber. He saw you and then he changed the combination of the lock. I had all the numbers in my mind. He entered the chamber and threw himself on you. I then recognized him as the man who had thrown that other man into the tank. Your light went out. I awoke with a terrible fright and screamed, it seemed so real. My father rushed into the room. I told him what I had dreamed and I begged him to come with me. I put on a suit of my husband's clothes, as I felt I would be less noticed. I did this while father went for a buggy.

"Then I conducted him to the manhole. We descended into the sewer and had no difficulty in getting into the passage. The door with the combination lock gave me the most trouble. I seemed to be in a dream. At one moment all inside that chamber would be perfectly visible to me, it seemed. I thought we never would get the door open. I cried out with joy when we did, for I felt that you were saved."

The girl fell back into her chair as if worn out when she had concluded.

"Heavens!" cried out Chick. "I never heard of such things! If I had not been a witness I could not believe in it."

"Did you see what became of the men?" Nick asked.

"I did not," replied the girl. "All my attention was centered on you."

"And you say that the man you saw who attacked me was the one you had seen in your dreams before?"

"The very man."

Nick was silent, but not idle. He was studying the face of this young woman. Finally he said:

"Are you willing to submit to an experiment in the interest of justice, if I were to ask it some time?"

"Why, yes, if it is anything I can do. If you are sure it is."

"I will tell you now," said Nick, "that you have wonderful clairvoyant powers, and you have helped me a great deal. You have saved my life."

The girl looked down modestly as Nick said this with great feeling.

Nick had ordered dinner to be sent to his room, and now they all partook of it, and then Mr. Grant and his daughter went away. Nick paid the bill and went back to his own hotel and was glad to rest a while. After his bath and while refreshing himself with a cigar he was annoyed to receive the following telegram:

"Your man has skipped. Not at address given. Have men searching for him."

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

When Nick Carter had settled in his own mind that Dr. Trownville knew too much for his own good about James Douglass and his doings, he had sent Chick out to conduct a peculiar system of investigations. It was not a difficult matter to dress Chick up in the attire of a young French nobleman. Chick had learned enough of the French language to speak it with

an American who did not understand it at all, as Nick had ascertained that Dr. Trownville did not.

Nick had discovered that the doctor, while posing as an educated man, was not a master of any language but his own. It was a comparatively easy thing to provide Chick with some good letters of introduction and give him the *entrée* to the doctor's handsome home. In fact, the doctor was delighted with the modest young foreigner who was so anxious to learn English, and who was so good a listener.

The doctor's wife, a kind old woman, also made him welcome. She had a son, she told him, who was away from home most of the time, and it was pleasant to see a young face about the house.

The servants were instructed to give Chick the freedom of the house. He came and went at pleasure.

It was with the utmost caution that Chick and Nick met. Chick's disguise was perfect, and on an evening when the two detectives met at a little table in a park much frequented by the French inhabitants of the city, they closely resembled the sprightly people of that artistic country.

"This is an excellent place for a conference," said Nick. "You could hardly have chosen a better one."

"I happened on it the other day, and thought we would be perfectly safe here."

"Did you call there to-day?" asked Nick. "Was the doctor at home?"

"He was. He had met with an accident, his wife told me, and she had been bathing his face and swollen eyes. She said that he had been knocked down by some runaway horses."

"By some one's two fists," grinned Nick.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing, go on. Tell me all you remember, Chick. No one knows better than you how important the unimportant things sometimes are."

"Well, while I was sitting there in the next parlor from where the doctor was, a young fellow came in with a letter for him. I saw him look at the writing and turn pale, and his hand seemed unsteady. He got up and went into the library with the young man, and, of course, I followed discreetly and listened."

"What did you hear?"

"I heard your name and only a few words besides. I could not make much out of them."

"Chick, as you value your life, tell me the exact words."

"I heard him say 'Carter', and 'dead,' and then something I could not make out at all only the word 'free.'"

"You heard nothing more?"

"Nothing at all. I was mortally afraid of being detected. I resumed my seat and pretended to be looking at some books his wife had provided for me. It was lucky I did, for the young man came out with a letter in his hand. He laid it on the table, bowed to me and went out. A minute or two after the doctor came into the room, and I arose to go. He was polite, but said I could see that he was a bit under the weather, and then he laughed at the idiom. Just then he saw the letter lying on the table, he took it up and said:

"'If that absent-minded clerk of mine hasn't gone off without this letter! My hand is so unsteady to-day I cannot write. He took it and has forgotten it.' He then asked me to write the address, which I did with pleasure, and he asked me then if he might trouble me to drop it into the box as I went out."

"To whom did you address that letter?"

"To Frank Carnes, 7 Seventh Avenue, Pittsburg, Pa."

"Did you mail it?"

"I did not."

"Chick, you have it with you. You like your dramatic moments, don't you?"

"This is what I asked you to meet me here for to-night. Here is the letter. What are you doing?"

"Reading the letter, Chick. Necessity knows no law."

An expression of satisfaction shone on Nick's face. He handed the letter to Chick, and that amazed young man read as follows:

"DEAR SIR: I sent you to-day five hundred dollars to the address in Philadelphia, and also a letter. You say in your letter that the police were on your track, and you thought it best to leave the city. The five

centuries are a dead loss now, for you will not be able to secure the package, and I will not dare to claim it when it is sent back to this city. I have a piece of good news to you. Old N. C. is dead."

"Well, I'll be blowed!" Chick exclaimed when he had finished reading the letter.

"The doctor is one of Douglass' accomplices! And the rascal is in Pittsburg."

"Now, you understand why I laughed when you spoke of his black eyes. Though, Chick, I don't mind telling you that I did not feel any more like laughing at him when I gave them to him than he did."

"Did you have a go with him?"

"I did. This letter makes many things clear to me, but there are a great many other things that I want to clear up. They must be cleared up before we can arrest Trownville."

"You believe Trownville to be the mysterious friend of Douglass?"

"Believe it? I know it! Another thing, Douglass was and is only a willing tool."

"You astonish me, Nick. But that is nothing new."

"There is no time to go over the thing now. I have work for you."

"I am ready."

"You must start for Pittsburg to-night. Douglass must be arrested quietly. Then try and bring him to this city."

"Kidnap him?"

"Yes, if you find it necessary."

"Any particular instructions?"

"Yes, let Douglass get the package from the express company before you arrest him."

"I intended to do that."

"You will mail the letter. Address another letter, or envelope rather."

"Are you not going to keep it?"

"No, by mailing it he will receive it about the time the express package arrives. He will not think to destroy it perhaps; very likely will have it on his person when you arrest him."

"He may destroy it, though."

"We must take the risk."

They left the little place of entertainment, and after separating long enough for some changes to be made in their disguises, they met at Nick's hotel.

Nick had sent for young Sterling to come to him this evening. He expected to find Sterling waiting for him. Nick felt worried about the young fellow. He had brooded over the case to such an extent that Nick feared he might sink into a sort of melancholy, from which he hoped to rouse him by giving him some work.

Nick left a note for Sterling in case he should come, then, changing his disguise, he went out.

Nick went straight to that saloon, which had seemed to be the one favored by Tim Blake and his confederates. It was his purpose to arrest Tim quietly, take him to his hotel and make him confess. He had no idea that Tim knew very much about the insurance fraud, but he knew enough about Trownville, alias Nolan, to help in building up a case against him.

Nick had no doubt that Trownville was the instigator of the whole nefarious business.

He saw none of the men who had been frequenters of the place, and he went back to his hotel to find that young Sterling had not come during his absence.

When the clock struck one, Nick put his hat on, took a cigar and started for the hotel at which Sterling had been stopping.

Nick found, on arriving there, that the young man went out early that morning and had not returned. His room key was at the office still. Nick was thoroughly alarmed at this. He did not know which way to turn.

"If those villains have got hold of the boy they will make short and secret work of it," he said to himself. "If it were not so late I would try the little clairvoyant. Poor girl, she would glady help us."

He walked in the direction of the house where Grant and his daughter were staying, to be near the center of operations if they were needed. As Nick went up the steps he heard a weird cry. It sounded again. It drowned the bell which he rang sharply and repeatedly.

Finally Mr. Grant came to the door and Nick told him his errand.

"Perhaps you'll be in time," said Grant; "she has had another of those dreams."

The instant the girl saw Nick she said:

"There are terrible things! A young man is being killed. I can see the way to him plainly. Oh, let us go!"

They hurried some wraps on the girl and started.

"What did you see?" asked Nick.

"I saw the men bind and gag the young one. He struggled to free himself. One of the men was the tall scoundrel who attacked you. They threw the young man across a bed and locked him in the room."

The detective was greatly impressed with the story. It chimed in with his fears. Another and another turn they took until they came to the part of the city where Dr. Trownville's drug store was situated. The girl was breathing heavily, and Nick confessed to himself that he felt the excitement almost as much as she did.

"Oh!" cried the girl, "I am seeing dreadful things. There is another man in that room, too. The tall man is turning a crank in the wall. Come, come," she said. She took hold of Nick's hand, as if he could stop the thing in a moment if he would. In a moment more she had led them straight up to the drug store of Dr. Trownville. Nick had some skeleton keys in his pocket which he had expected to use later. He now took one out and unlocked the door. The three people went quietly in, the girl still keeping hold of Nick's hand. Her father was close behind them.

"This is the room," she said, as she led them up to a door. Nick threw himself against it with his whole strength. It did not yield. Then, quick as thought, he had picked the lock and bounded into the room.

He was closely followed by Grant. But the poor girl had sunk down exhausted outside.

As the door was thrown open the detective heard a loud click. It sounded like the click of a lock.

The room was dark, but in an instant Nick had his lantern lighted. Upon the bed lay poor Edward Sterling.

"That old devil has escaped through some secret door," ejaculated Grant.

"Look after your daughter a moment and I will liberate Sterling," said Nick. He unbound the young man, who, when released, was able to stand up, and who declared:

"I am all right, Mr. Carter, now that you have come."

Nick looked for the other man and by the light of the lantern he saw a narrow door which looked as if it might be that of a closet. This it proved to be, and after they got the door open they found at almost the last gasp the body of Tim Blake.

They consulted together and decided that now was the time to make a search. They revived Tim enough so that Nick, with a grim sense of humor, told him he had revived him in order to arrest him, which he did. Nick put handcuffs on him, while Grant went out and got two carriages, one to take his suffering daughter home in, and the other in which came a sturdy policeman, to take Tim where he would be found when wanted. As for Sterling, Nick was going to keep him under his own eye.

Nick directed the policeman to give a note, which he wrote to the officer at headquarters, so that no stir whatever would be made about the arrest of Tim, or anything be made public in regard to the discovery of young Sterling as yet.

Nick entered a third carriage, and taking Sterling to his own hotel and exacting a promise from him that he would not leave the room unless Nick himself came for him, Nick drove rapidly to the home of Dr. Trownville.

He was certain that the villain had escaped from the drug store by some secret exit. He had very little hope of capturing him at his home, but he did expect to get further evidence there against him.

As Nick surmised, the home of the doctor was a scene of excitement. Mrs. Trownville was in the parlor crying and wringing her hands.

"Where is the doctor?" Nick asked, when he was, after some parley with a servant, let into the house.

"Gone and Louis with him." She looked pitifully

at Nick. "Can you tell me, sir, anything about it? Are you a friend of his?"

Nick's kind heart almost failed him. Why did these scoundrels drag good women into their lives?

"No, Mrs. Trownville," he said, gently. "I am not a friend of your husband. I am an officer come here in the hope of finding him, that I might arrest him."

"My God!" cried the woman.

"Mrs. Trownville, listen to me." Nick took her hand in his, and endeavored to quiet her.

"It is a terrible thing, but your husband is a great criminal. If you love him I pity you, but I must do my duty."

After a little quiet talk with her, Nick found out that the doctor had come home about half an hour before; he had gone to his own room, and began to pack up a few things. Louis, the son, had come in, and seeing his father's door open, had gone in and then came and called his mother. All that the man had told his wife was that he was obliged to go away and that Louis was going with him.

"He came back to tell me, just as he got to the door, that if the police came here I was to tell them I did not know anything about his whereabouts. Which is true enough," she added, "since he did not tell me one thing more. He did not even bid me good-by."

Here she began to cry, and Nick looked at her in compassion, while he wished the tears of women might be shed over better men.

Mrs. Trownville evidently felt the helplessness of her condition, and Nick had so impressed her as a good man doing a painful duty, that she made no objection whatever to his search of the house. She even gave him some keys to open the desks and drawers in the library.

He discovered nothing, and he left the house to go to the police station, where he had an interview with Tim Blake.

Tim was perfectly silent. Nick could not prevail upon him to confess his part in the insurance frauds.

The departure of Dr. Trownville could no longer be kept quiet. The newspapers were full of all sorts of stories and rumors filled the air. The authorities doubled the rewards offered for the capture of the ring-leaders in one of the boldest and most successful swindles of modern times.

Plenty of evidence against Dr. Trownville was found when the police inspected the flats that bore his name. The police gave the establishment the name of Trownville's castle. A regular labyrinth was exposed. It was there that victims almost without number had been done away with.

There were hundreds of rooms, with all sorts of contrivances—trap doors, dumb-waiters and ingenious contrivances for disposing of the remains.

There was a steel room which contained a collection of jewelry taken from people who had never left the building alive—articles that had been advertised for and that the police of several cities had been searching for were found here.

The disclosures that were made here created a sensation through the civilized world.

Nick kept silent in regard to the part that Grant and his daughter had played. They had nothing to gain by its being known, and Nick yielded to their desire not to be mentioned in connection with it. He gave them a liberal sum and insisted on their taking it, not as pay, he was careful to tell them, but as a relief to his feeling of gratitude.

Not yet satisfied with what he had found out, Nick went to the Trownville home again.

A search, in which Mrs. Trownville aided him, resulted in finding underclothing like that which was on the body of Henry Sterling. Mrs. Trownville also identified the strange-looking knife which had been found on the body as the property of her husband. The case against the two men, Douglass and Trownville, was now complete.

All that remained was to capture them.

Nick was confident that Chick would get hold of his man in Pittsburg. He gave his whole attention to the tracing of Trownville and his son.

He discovered that they did not leave the city by train, but by carriage. They had driven to a town twenty miles away and had bought tickets there for Philadelphia.

Nick was going to start at once for that city, when he received a message from Chick. It read:

"Have captured Douglass. He is now locked up at police headquarters. When I arrested him he had just received money package. When he was searched the letter was found in his pocket. Evidence conclusive. Have read all about Trownville castle. Douglass kicked up a row and I had to have him locked up. He has seen a newspaper account of the flight of the doctor. Will await instructions. Have kept the arrest of Douglass out of the papers. I congratulate you. CHICK."

Nick read the dispatch over after he was on the train.

"I will meet Chick at once," he said. "Good boy!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A GREWSOME CONFESSION.

When Nick reached Pittsburg he went at once to the hotel where he expected to find Chick. He hoped to give him a pleasant surprise. Instead, he found that Chick had gone out, saying that he might not come back that night. He had left the key at the office. Nick left instructions to have Chick given a note from him at whatever hour he came in.

It was late, and Nick had given up seeing him for the night, when Chick arrived. The two men grasped each other's hands with genuine feeling.

"Well, Nick, I found another note in my box besides yours. Guess from whom it is."

"Dr. Trownville?" said Nick, giving the most improbable name he could think of.

"No; from Douglass."

"What does he want?"

"To have me call on him."

"I suppose," said Nick, laughing, "he will be glad to see me, too. Let us go early in the morning. Unless Chick, you would rather go alone. He is your capture, you know."

"I only carried out your instructions to the letter, Nick. I'm not always so fortunate as to be able to do that."

Early morning found them seated in the cell with the much-wanted man. He seemed thoroughly cowed. He was a weak and cowardly person, and now that he was found out he did not seem to have any manhood left, or even the appearance of it.

He guessed in a moment who Nick was, and said, in a weak voice:

"Gentlemen, I want to make a clean breast of it all, everything."

"It will be well for you if you do," said Nick.

"I was doing business as an insurance agent in the city of Lynn, and not doing very well, when I began to be crooked. I suppose I was crooked inside all the time, but I did not really know it until an uncle of mine came home from India. He and his daughter came here to live. He had been an officer or something in the British service, and I guessed afterward that he had been dismissed.

"He had learned a lot of things from the natives, and among them was the power to simulate death. He taught it to his daughter. One night he came to my office and said that he knew I wasn't doing as well as I ought with my talents. He said he had a good, safe scheme for making money. He said it was the best and easiest kind of a scheme. For we three need never divulge it to a living soul.

"He proposed that I should insure my cousin Jennie's life. She should simulate death, and we would collect the money, and divide. I placed the insurance, and while I was in a distant city for my company, my cousin Jennie was taken violently ill. She and her father had made no acquaintances or friends, and if they had it is not probable any one would have suspected anything. A physician was called. He thought it was a slight nervous attack, and left a prescription. Almost immediately after she was taken worse and expired in great agony, as an old woman could testify, whom my uncle called in as she was passing the house. Her body was taken to the cemetery. It isn't needful to go into that, but everybody was deceived.

"The sorrowing father claimed a considerable sum of insurance. The adjuster found nothing wrong, and

the company paid it promptly. I had meanwhile resigned and gone to another city. My uncle came there after a time and we worked the same game there. Then we came to C—— and then I met Dr. Trownville. He was the doctor sent for when my cousin was taken ill with a view to death. I think he suspected from the first that we were not straight people. One day he came to me, and without saying he knew or suspected anything, he suggested just about such a line of business as that we had been engaged in. He told me about his castle and all his appliances for putting to death and destroying all traces. His plan beat ours."

"Oh," said Nick, "I am used to criminals and their tales of evil, but my friend you tire me. I want no more of it.

"If you know who killed the husband of poor Nora Grant, and who killed Henry Sterling and the others, say so. But I cannot listen this morning to any more of this."

The fellow looked as if he resented Nick's remarks.

"I do know," he said, in a surly manner. "Dr. Trownville and I helped him."

"Did no workmen suspect what was going on there?" asked Nick.

"No. I don't think one of them ever did. The doctor had so many things going on at once that he changed the men about a good deal. The most that any of them were told was that the doctor was conducting a lot of experiments for the good of humanity."

"Did this fiend never relent?" said Nick, in a dreamy sort of tone.

"Relent? No, why should he? He was making money."

"My God!" said Nick. "Is it possible that I hear you aright?"

"I insured the lives of twenty men, and then he enticed them into his den and killed them. We collected four insurances and would have collected more but Sterling's son began to make inquiries, and then a woman whose husband was killed had to make a fuss."

Chick and Nick looked at each other when this woman was mentioned.

"Trownville held all the money. On the day that Sterling left the hotel I took him to a saloon, a nice-looking place, and asked him to wait while I got a glass of water. He said, 'Wouldn't I rather have wine?' and I said, 'Yes if he would join me.' He did, and Tim Blake fixed the knockout drops. We gave Blake Sterling's watch, and that was all he got.

"Then we took Sterling to the doctor's rooms, and Trownville killed him with gas. The doctor told me he got rid of the cabman that very night."

"No wonder we could not find him," said Chick.

"Trownville did not employ Tim Blake again, to my knowledge, but I heard that he secured his services in trying to put poor young Sterling out of the way."

"Did Trownville's son know of his father's doings?"

"Yes. He helped him."

"Where is your uncle?"

"They have gone back to India. They did not have anything to do with the murders. They have enough to live on there.

"My uncle was afraid to stay in this country after he found that he was connected with Trownville in the slightest way."

When the rascal had concluded his so-called confession, which Nick and Chick both made some notes of, they left him with joy and returned to their hotel.

That evening they both started for Philadelphia.

CHAPTER IX.

A TRIUMPHANT CONCLUSION.

Arriving in Philadelphia, Nick began a vigorous search for Trownville. He furnished the police with a description of the doctor and his son. A general alarm was sent out for their arrest. Late in the afternoon of the day Nick and Chick had arrived, word was brought to Nick that a man answering to the description of the doctor had left the city the night before, but he was alone.

He had taken a train for New York, and it was believed that he would make for a fast-sailing steamer

and be lost to the courts forever. It struck Nick as probable. It even occurred to him that the man might try to join that other swindler and villain in India. Nick, taking Chick with him, went at once to New York.

Nick had, in less than half a day, a description of the man in the hands of hundreds of men. Every outgoing vessel was watched. The young man was also being looked out for, but Nick concentrated every thought and effort of his own on the great game, the doctor.

It was just beginning to be dark when Nick, carefully disguised, was strolling along out to one of the piers where a steamer lay which was to sail the next day.

Suddenly his attention was attracted by a man who seemed to be following him. If Nick went slowly he noticed that the man did. If Nick hastened his steps, the man did the same.

After a few blocks of this sort of thing, Nick turned suddenly around. The light from a gas jet in a window fell for an instant on the man's tall form, and Nick started forward, thinking he had caught his prey. As Nick dashed toward him the man made the same sort of plunge forward, and with the spring of an infuriated animal he slipped past Nick and was gone.

Nick looked about him in a dazed sort of way. The man had disappeared as completely as if the earth had swallowed him. Nick looked about for some explanation of what seemed like a mystery to him.

Stepping back, he nearly disappeared himself. Through some carelessness, a coal hole had been left open, and the man who had been following him had stepped into the place. Nick made up his mind to follow. He was armed, and he always carried his little dark lantern. He would not follow until he had called a policeman, for he felt certain that now that he knew that Trownville was in the city he could nab him.

Nick rapped loudly for a policeman, and together they investigated the coal hole. They followed every available track, even entering the building and searching, but no trace of the man did they find. This was one of the greatest disappointments Nick had ever had. It had seemed so easy, and to be balked in this way was humiliating. He would not give it up. The man could not have left that place without their seeing him.

"I will stay here all night, but I will find him."

"It's no use, boss," said the policeman; "these fellows, they do give us the slip sometimes."

But Nick was not to be discouraged, and stay he did.

At last even his patience was exhausted, and he went back to his hotel. He had the place examined the next day, and with a strong light the men found a hole in the wall, through which the man had crawled into a cellar, from which he had made his escape. He had left traces of blood as he crowded his body through, and bits of his torn clothing.

"Fortune seems to favor him," said Nick. "I used to think it favored me."

"I never saw you discouraged before, Nick," said Chick to him that night. "If you are going to give way I shall lose heart myself."

For two days Nick continued to be disconsolate, though he did not let Chick see how he felt.

Young Sterling had come on to New York, and Patsy, Nick Carter's other assistant, had been sent for. He had been away on a minor matter. The four men were sitting in Nick's room at the hotel talking the great case over.

"It will be the worst failure of my life if we do not capture this man."

"Nick," said Chick, solemnly, "it is going to be your great success."

"I have known all the time that it is no common criminal with whom we have had to deal. He will not do the common and usual thing."

"Well," said Chick, "let's cheer ourselves up by imagining the most unusual thing he might do."

"Good," said Nick, laughing.

"He might come here and rap on the door and ask for Mr. Carter," said Patsy.

"Not so bad," said Chick. "He might go to the police headquarters and give himself up."

"He might go to Pittsburg and ask to be allowed to share the cell of his friend Douglass," Sterling added.

"Or," cried Nick, rising from his chair, "he might go home and hide. His wife would take him in. Gentlemen, be good to yourselves. I am going to start for C—— on the next train that leaves this town."

Nick was in earnest. He had thought the whole thing out. He told each one what to do and where to wait for him. At the last he decided to take Patsy with him. He knew just how to use him. Nick's brain was working perhaps all the better for the period when he felt that his wits had deserted him.

He and Patsy were soon on their way to the Western city.

The morning after their arrival Patsy went with a note to the house of Mrs. Trownville. He found out from the girl who opened the door that she was still there.

"Can I see her?" asked Patsy. "I have come from a friend of hers."

"No," said the girl, "she is not seeing any one now. Poor lady, she is not going to stay here very long, I guess. I thought she would have gone before now, but——" she stopped, and Patsy said, in a confidential way:

"She has company now?"

"Yes, her brother has come."

"So I heard. I used to know her brother well. A little short fellow, isn't he?"

"My! no," said the girl, giggling. "He is bigger than you are. He is almost as tall as the doctor was."

"Oh! yes," said the unblushing Patsy. "It wasn't her brother, come to think of it. It was her cousin I used to know."

"I must not stand here with this door open any longer," said the girl, reluctantly. Patsy's smiling face seemed pleasant to her in that house of gloom and unhappiness.

"Well, I don't give this note to any one but the lady herself. I'll wait and come when a more accommodating girl opens the door."

"I have to do as I am told."

"My case, too," said Patsy. "Good-by."

The girl shut the door and then opened it to say:

"Maybe she'll see you to-morrow."

"Yes, maybe she will."

After Patsy had left the house behind him and had turned a corner, he ran like a deer. He flung himself into Nick's room and told the story of Mrs. Trownville's company.

Nick was delighted, and did not for one moment doubt that he was going to get his man. He detailed a number of trusty men to watch the back of the house and he himself, carefully disguised, went up to that part of the town at once. He did not expect to capture Dr. Trownville without a great deal of trouble, and he went provided with all sorts of things he might need. He knew the strength of the arms of that worthy. As he approached the house he saw a man coming along the street, whom he saw in an instant was in a disguise. He thought the walk was like that of the doctor, but he was not certain. As the man came nearer, Nick felt certain of his man.

Without a word he sprang upon him and snapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

He then pulled off the man's disguise and saw that he was Trownville.

A terrific struggle followed. Trownville fought with the strength of a wild animal. Worse than that, with the strength of a desperate man.

His struggles were of no avail. The police came to the assistance of Nick. A great crowd gathered, and the news was cried out that Trownville was captured.

They soon had him locked up in a cell at the police headquarters.

Nick went back to the hotel and wired the great news to Chick. He also wired for him to come on and bring Edward Sterling with him.

Patsy meanwhile had not been idle. He had been doing a little detective work on his own account. He had gone again to the house. He had asked the good-natured girl if they hadn't more company. He had found out enough to make him think that the son, Louis Trownville, had also returned home.

Patsy communicated this news to Nick, who ordered a search of the house to be made.

"Can I go with the officers?" asked Patsy.

"If you wish to. But why do you want to go, Patsy?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Patsy, in a shamefaced way. He was afraid that Nick would laugh if he told him that the reason he wanted to go was to show that giggling girl that he could get into the house. It did seem rather beneath his dignity. Still, he went along.

Patsy did not feel like joking or laughing when he came into the house, for there, in an upper room of his home, the miserable son of a wicked father had committed suicide the moment he had heard of his father's arrest.

The wife and mother had lost her reason and was being removed by some kind-hearted people from this abode of misery.

Douglass was brought back to C—— and then preparations were made for a great trial. The insurance companies that had been swindled were determined that the strong arm of the law should infold these criminals. Their case should serve as a warning to other men who might be tempted to try to follow in their footsteps.

To Nick Carter came a large share of glory and of money. With his usual generosity he gave the "Boys," as he called them, a good slice.

The trial of Dr. Trownville and of James Douglass proved to be one of the most sensational cases that the world had ever known. Lawyers became famous for their pleas and chemists shared some of the honors. Dr. Trownville was convicted and his sentence was the full extent of the law. The world was well rid of such a villain. Douglass was sentenced to serve the country in the State's prison for twenty-five years.

Tim Blake kept his mouth tightly closed. For this virtue he was rewarded. He was given five years in the State's prison.

Edward Sterling went back to the East to make his home. He never entirely recovered from the terrible scenes through which he had passed. But he always retained a great fondness for Nick Carter, and often wrote to him of the changes that came into his life. One in particular gave joy to Nick, when he heard that to Edward Sterling and wife a little son had been born and had been christened Nicholas Carter.

Nick was soon engaged upon another case, but he never forgot his experience in the chamber of horrors. Chick had often to remind him that it was, after all, one of the greatest successes of his busy life.

THE END.

A tramp convict, known as Mission Mike, was found dead under most mysterious circumstances. The clews pointed to various persons, but there was apparently no motive. Nick Carter took hold of the case and found himself involved in all sorts of adventures before he arrived at a satisfactory conclusion. It is a most absorbing narrative that is contained in the next issue, No. 362, "Nick Carter's Search for a Motive; or, Why Mission Mike was Murdered."

DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY

CONTAINING

THE MOST UNIQUE AND FASCINATING TALES OF WESTERN ROMANCE

339—Diamond Dick's Race for Gold; or, The Lost Treasure Box.
340—Diamond Dick Missing; or, The Veteran's Unknown Pard.
341—Diamond Dick's Trip East; or, Turning the Tables on the City Sharps.
342—Diamond Dick's Summer Resort; or, High Old Times at the Sea Shore.
343—Diamond Dick's "Give-and-Take"; or, Caught in the Undertow.
344—Diamond Dick's "White Ghost"; or, Run Down by Auto.
345—Diamond Dick at the Circus; or, An Old Friend in a New Game.
346—Diamond Dick at Coney Island; or, A Warm Proposition Played to a Finish.
347—Diamond Dick's Skiplap Pard; or, The Cheerful Waif's Big Winning.
348—Diamond Dick's Stand-Off; or, The Shotgun Messenger's Last Trip.
349—Diamond Dick at Fort Piegan; or, Calling an Army Bluff.
350—Diamond Dick's Makeshift; or, The New Boss at Hold-Over.
351—Diamond Dick's Golden Spike; or, Bucking the Track Layers.
352—Diamond Dick's Schedule; or, The First Train to Dangerfield.
353—Diamond Dick's Wild West; or, A Fair Field and No Favor.
354—Diamond Dick's Double-Bill; or, A Hot Turn Between Acts.
355—Diamond Dick's Farewell Performance; or, A Warm Go for the Gate Money.
356—Diamond Dick's Dago Dupes; or, The Bowery Boy and the "Has-Been."
357—Diamond Dick's Phantom Hand; or, The Mystery of the "Fly-by-night."
358—Diamond Dick's World-Beater; or, The Race for the Hurricane Handicap.
359—Diamond Dick's Boy Pards; or, The Boarding House Puzzle.
360—Diamond Dick and the Safe-Crackers; or, Two-Spot's Level Best.
361—Diamond Dick's Last Call; or, Run Down on the Ferry.
362—Diamond Dick's Four-Hands-Round; or, A Game of Keeps in the Catskills.
363—Diamond Dick's Line-Up; or, The Young Sport's Banner Play.
364—Diamond Dick's Web-Foot Pard; or, Queer Work on the Hurricane Deck.
365—Diamond Dick's Run to Denver; or, Old Sixty's Last Mix-Up.
366—Diamond Dick Among the Pueblos; or, A Bold Play for a Big Stake.
367—Diamond Dick's Dark Chase; or, Captured by Flash-Light.
368—Diamond Dick on the Bar-X Range; or, Captain Fan and the Rustlers.
369—Diamond Dick as a Deputy Sheriff; or, Fighting the Mob at Piute.
370—Diamond Dick's Pair of Winners; or, Two-Spot and Nixey's Double-Play.
371—Diamond Dick in Old Mexico; or, The Gold-Bugs of Guanajay.
372—Diamond Dick's Treasure-Trove; or, The Secret of the Great Stone Idol.
373—Diamond Dick in the Field; or, Handsome Harry's Peril.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, New York.

BRAVE AND BOLD WEEKLY

Contains Biggest and Best Stories of All Descriptions.
A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EACH WEEK.

19—Under Sealed Orders; or, Lost in the Wilds of Yucatan. By Cornelius Shea.
20—The Mysterious Box; or, The Hidden Valley of Pirate Island. By author of "Among the Malays."
21—Among the Utes; or, The Marvelous Adventures of Two Young Hunters. By Herbert H. Clyde.
22—The Island of Wonders; or, The Mysteries of the Echoing Cave. By the author of "Second-Sight Sam."
23—The Lost Lode; or, The Boy Partners of Diamond Bar. By Cornelius Shea.
24—The Bicycle Boys of Blueville; or, Joe Masterson's Unknown Enemies. By the author of "Bicycle and Gun."
25—Submarine Mart; or, The Wonderful Cruise of the "Fire-Fly." By the author of "Second-Sight Sam."
26—Jockey Sam; or, Riding for Fortune. By Ernest A. Young.
27—Frank Warren, Alchemist; or, The Diamond Makers. By Weldon J. Cobb.
28—The Jail Breakers of Shirley; or, The Boy Who Dared and Won. By Matt Royal.
29—Robert Brendon, the Bell Boy; or, Under the Hypnotic Spell. By John De Morgan.
30—The Mysterious Millionaire; or, The Queerest Job on Record. By Matt Royal.
31—Saved by His Luck; or, What Followed the Yacht Race. By Cornelius Shea.
32—The Chance of His Life; or, The Messenger Boy Who Got There. By Howard Haskins.
33—Upright and Honest; or, Harry Hale's Struggle to Success. By Henry Harrison Haines.
34—Two Young Inventors; or, The Treasure of Three River Mountain. By William Bennett.
35—The Life of the School; or, Out for Fun and Fortune. By author of "Bicycle Boys of Blueville."
36—Tom Hamlin, Mesmerist; or, The Boy With the Iron Will. By Matt Royal.
37—The Puzzle of Panther's Run; or, Leon Gale's Triumph. By Frank Earl.
38—A Girl Crusoe; or, The Wonder of the Isle of Gnomes. By Cornelius Shea.
39—The Cash Boy; or, From Prison to Fortune. By Horatio Algen, Jr.
40—The Electric Eye; or, Helped by the X-Rays. By Weldon J. Cobb.
41—The Boy and the Deacon; or, Enemies for Life. By Harrie Irving Hancock.
42—Louis Stanhope, Hero; or, The Boy Who Disappeared. By John De Morgan.
43—Mat, the Fugitive; or, The Witch Doctor's Prophecy. By John H. Whitson.
44—The Boy Broker; or, Fighting the Financiers. By Paul Rand.
45—Adrift in New York; or, Dodger and Florence Braving the World. By Horatio Alger, Jr.
46—A Lad of Steel; or, Running Down the Tiger. By Matt Royal.
47—Which is Which? or, Winning a Name by Proxy. By Weldon J. Cobb.
48—A Dashing Fire Laddie; or, The Heroism of Dick Macy. By John De Morgan.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William St., New York.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

THE BEST DETECTIVE STORIES IN THE WORLD

327—Nick Carter's Siamese Puzzle; or, The Lost Chest of Diamonds.
328—Nick Carter's Three-Cornered Chase; or, How Patsy Looped the Loop.
329—Nick Carter's Clever Capture; or, The Tip that Didn't Work.
330—Nick Carter's Block Signal; or, Foiled in the Nick of Time.
331—Nick Carter's Thumb Clew; or, The Counterfeiter's False Move.
332—Nick Carter and the Blue Death; or, The Lost Car of the Denver Express.
333—Nick Carter and the Red Masks; or, The Mystery of Cab 21.
334—Nick Carter's Crooked Trail; or, The Plot for the Glassford Millions.
335—Nick Carter's False Clew; or, Playing the Dupe for Big Game.
336—Nick Carter's Drag Net; or, Forcing the Hands of the Secret Six.
337—Nick Carter's Death Photo; or, Revealed by a Camera.
338—Nick Carter and the Will Forgers; or, Playing for a Fortune.
339—Nick Carter and the Living Mask; or, Murdered Without a Mark.
340—Nick Carter's Night Watch; or, Working in the Dark.
341—Nick Carter's Chemical Test; or, Animal Blood or Human?
342—Nick Carter Within an Inch of His Life; or, The Mystery of the Pretty Typewriter
343—Nick Carter and the Phantom of Poverty Lane; or, A Bundle of Tangled Clews.
344—Nick Carter Winning a Close Game; or, Bombshells in the Camp.
345—Nick Carter and the Prince of Stranglers; or, The Black Cord of the League.
346—Nick Carter On and Off the Scent; or, The Mysterious Tragedy of Herald Square.
347—Nick Carter on a Parisian Trail; or, In the Death Trap of the Silencers.
348—Nick Carter's Battle Against Odds; or, The Mystery of the Detroit Pawnbroker.
349—Nick Carter on His Mettle; or, The Trapping of Cool Kate.
350—Nick Carter's Life Chase; or, The Shot from Ambush.
351—Nick Carter's Chain of Guilt; or, The Robbery of Express No. 5.
352—Nick Carter and the Langworthy Treasure; or, The Strange Doings at the Ruined Fort.
353—Nick Carter Forging the Fetters; or, The Outwitting of a Clever Villain.
354—Nick Carter from Peril to Peril; or, The Crime of the Stagecoach.
355—Nick Carter Hemmed in by Enemies; or, Where Mystery Followed Mystery.
356—Nick Carter and the Yellow Spider's Web; or, 'Frisco's Most Sensational Case.
357—Nick Carter in a Finish Fight; or, Hunting Down the Mining Swindlers.
358—Nick Carter and the Triple Identity; or, Unraveling Mystery "47."
359—Nick Carter and the Queen of Diamonds; or, The Turns of Fortune's Wheel.
360—Nick Carter and the Missing Jewels; or, A Tale of Uncertain Clews.
361—Nick Carter's Great Success; or, The Hunting Down of Insurance Frauds.
362—Nick Carter's Search for a Motive; or, Why Mission Mike was Murdered.

All of the above numbers always on hand. If you cannot get them from your newsdealer, five cents a copy will bring them to you by mail, postpaid.

STREET & SMITH, Publishers, 238 William Street, New York.

STREET & SMITH'S POPULAR 5c. LIBRARIES

LARGEST CIRCULATION IN AMERICA.

TIP TOP WEEKLY

The ideal publication for the American youth. Contains stories of the adventures of Frank merriwell, the famous Yale athlete, and Dick, his younger brother, who is the pride of Fardale Academy.

There are competitions continually running in its columns, whereby the successful teams may win complete outfits, including uniforms. The following is a list of the latest numbers:

383. Dick Merriwell Surprised; or, Cap'n Wiley's Wind Jammers.
384. Frank Merriwell's Quick Move; or, Cooling Off Cap'n Wiley.
385. Dick Merriwell's Red Friend; or, Old Joe Crowfoot to the Front.
386. Frank Merriwell's Nomads; or, Cap'n Wiley's Clever Work.
387. Dick Merriwell's Distrust; or, Meeting the Masked Champions.
388. Frank Merriwell's Grand Finish; or, The Independent Champions of America.

A Different Complete Story Every Week.

BRAVE AND BOLD

This line is sure to please every boy who likes variety. The stories are long, and detail the adventures of an entirely new set of characters each week. The authors are the best known, and have made excellent reputations by their highly interesting and original stories. Boys, if you want a treat, get this library every week.

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

33. Upright and Honest; or, Harry Hale's Struggle to Success. By Henry Harrison Haines
34. Two Young Inventors; or, The Treasure of Three Pine Mountain. By Bennett
35. The Life of the School; or, Out for Fun and Fortune. By Author of "Bicycle Boys of Blueville."
36. Tom Hamlin, Mesmerist; or, The Boy With the Iron Will. By Matt Royal
37. The Puzzle of Panther's Run; or, Leon Gale's Triumph. By Frank Earle
38. A Girl Crusoe; or, The Wonder of the Isle of Gnomes. By Cornelius Shea

More Reading Matter Than Any Five-Cent Detective Library Published.

Young Broadbrim Weekly

Young Broadbrim is the shrewdest and most clever boy detective that ever lived. His marvelous strength and wonderful nerve enables him to penetrate where most men would fear to go.

All the tales of his advencures are absolutely new.

The following is a list of the latest numbers written especially for this line:

52. Young Broadbrim, the Boy Detective; or, The Old Quaker's Faithful Ally.
53. Young Broadbrim in Kansas City; or, What Was Found in the Flood
54. Young Broadbrim on an Aerial Trail; or, The Terrible Ordeal of Fire
55. Young Broadbrim and Company; or, Solving the Mysteries of Rockwood.
56. Young Broadbrim Triumphant; or, The Girl Cracksman.
57. Young Broadbrim Fighting an Unknown Power; or, A Scientific Murderer.

Greatest Detective Alive.

Nick Carter Weekly

No detective stories published can compare with those published in this library. Nick Carter has had innumerable thrilling adventures in which he was assisted by Chick and Patsy, two fine, intelligent young fellows. Boys, you ought to buy this publication every week and read about Nick's wonderful escapes and captures

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

346. Nick Carter On and Off the Scent; or, The Mysterious Tragedy at Herald Square.
347. Nick Carter on a Parisian Trail; or, The Death Trap of the "Silencers"
348. Nick Carter's Battle Against Odds; or, The Mystery of the Detroit Pawnbroker.
349. Nick Carter on His Metal. or, The Trapping of Cool Kate.
350. Nick Carter's Life Chase; or, The Shot From Ambush.
351. Nick Carter's Chain of Guilt; or, The Robbery of Express No. 5.

STORIES OF THE FAR WEST.

Diamond Dick Weekly

These are stories about the great Diamond Dick and his son, Bertie. Every boy will be more than satisfied with these tales, because they are drawn true to life, and are extremely interesting. Diamond Dick is a dead shot, and never allows a desperado to get the drop on him.

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

359 Diamond Dick's Boy Pards; or, The Boarding House Puzzle.
360. Diamond Dick and the Safe Crackers; or, Two Spot's Level Best.
361. Diamond Dick's Last Call; or, Run Down on the Ferry.
362. Diamond Dick's Four Hand's Round; or, A Game of Keeps in the Catskills.
363. Diamond Dick's Line Up; or, The Young Sport's Banner Play.
364. Diamond Dick's Web Foot Pard; or, Queer Work on the Hurricane Deck.

TALES OF FRONTIER ADVENTURE.

Buffalo Bill Stories

Every boy ought to read the adventures of Buffalo Bill, as detailed in this library.

They are full of lively adventure, and just the kind that thrills the heart of every true boy.

The following is a list of the latest numbers:

120. Buffalo Bill's Discovery; or, The Mystery of the Gold Treasure.
121. Buffalo Bill's Clean-Up; or, Routing the Rascals of Yellow Dust City.
122. Buffalo Bill's Pards of the Plains; or, The Dead Shot Four.
123. Buffalo Bill's Helping Hand; or, The Secret of Kid Glove Kate.
124. Buffalo Bill's Boy Pard; or, Captain Hyena and His Red Angels.
125. Buffalo Bill's Sacrifice; or, Waneta, the Indian Queen.

Young Broadbrim Weekly

MORE READING MATTER THAN ANY 5c. LIBRARY PUBLISHED

Price 5 Cents. Handsome Colored Covers

Tales of the thrilling adventures of a young detective whose success in hunting down all classes of criminals is unequalled.

LATEST TITLES

52. Young Broadbrim, the Boy Detective;
or, The Old Quaker's Youthful Ally.
53. Young Broadbrim in Kansas City;
or, What Was Found in the Flood.
54. Young Broadbrim on an Aerial Trail;
or, The Terrible Ordeal of Fire.
55. Young Broadbrim and Company;
or, Solving the Mysteries of Rockwood.
56. Young Broadbrim Triumphant;
or, The Girl Cracksman.
57. Young Broadbrim Fighting an Unknown Power;
or, A Scientific Murderer.
58. Young Broadbrim on a Weird Case;
or, The Mystery of the Phantom Voices.
59. Young Broadbrim at Coney Island;
or, Dandy Dick Shanghaied.
60. Young Broadbrim on a Newsboy Mystery;
or, Dandy Dick's First Case.

To be had of all newsdealers or sent upon receipt of price by the publishers

STREET & SMITH, 238 William Street, New York